

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 03513 140834Z
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SUBJECT: LAPO IN BRATISLAVA

1. THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC'S DEC. 10 CONCERT IN
BRATISLAVA WAS A STUNNING MUSICAL SUCCESS, AND A SMOOTH
LOGISTICAL EXERCISE, PROVIDING A HIGHLY POSITIVE ENDING,
BOTH TO LAPO'S EASTERN EUROPEAN TOUR IN GENERAL, AND ITS
CZECHOSLOVAK STAY IN PARTICULAR.

2. ZUBIN MEHTA CALLED REDUTA HALL, THE CRYSTAL-CHANDELLIERED,
GOLD AND WHITE BAROQUE HALL IN WHICH THE DEC. 10 CONCERT
WAS HELD "ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE AND ACOUSTICALLY PERFECT
CONCERT HALLS I HAVE EVER PLAYED IN." THE PROGRAM: IVES
"FOUR PIECES", MOZART'S G MINOR SYMPHONY, DVORAK'S 7TH
SYMPHONY. THREE ENCORES FOLLOWED: VERDI'S "FORTUNES
OF DESTINY" OVERTURE, DVORAK'S "SLAVONIC DANCE #8",
AND SOUSA'S "STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER."

3. DESPITE BEING THE LAST CONCERT IN THE ORCHESTRA'S
EASTERN EUROPEAN TOUR, AND THE MUSICIANS HAVING NO
REHEARSALS IN THREE WEEKS, THE PLAYERS HAD LOST
NONE OF THEIR MUSICAL FRESHNESS OR PRECISION IN PLAYING.

4. THE RESPONSE OF THE STANDING ROOM ONLY AUDIENCE
OF OVER 1,000 PERSONS WAS WARM, THE APPLAUSE PROLONGED,
AND THE POST-CONCERT COMMENTS UNQUALIFIEDLY FAVORABLE.
AS IN PRAGUE, THERE WAS LITTLE ADVANCE PUBLICITY FOR
THE CONCERT, WHICH COINCIDED WITH THE CLOSE OF
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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 03513 140834Z

CZECHOSLOVAK-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP MONTH. STILL, THE HALL

WAS FILLED, THE AUDIENCE INCLUDED MANY YOUNG PEOPLE, AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE CAME FROM TOWNS 150 KILOMETRES DISTANT JUST TO HEAR LAPO PLAY.

5. VIPS ATTENDING INCLUDED THE SLOVAK DEPUTY MINISTERS OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION, THE RECTOR OF COMENIUS UNIVERSITY, AND SEVERAL MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS. THE MINISTER OF CULTURE, WHOM DIPLOMATIC PROTOCOL HAD TOLD US WAS TO BE THE RANKING GUEST, CHOSE INSTEAD TO ATTEND A "SOVIET FRIENDSHIP" MUSICAL-POLITICAL EXTRAVAGANZA ALSO HELD THAT SAME EVENING.

6. AMBASSADOR BYRNE, AT AN AFTER CONCERT GATHERING, RECALLED AMERICA'S HISTORIC TIES WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN GENERAL AND SLOVAKIA IN PARTICULAR, CITING THE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF SUCH AMERICANS OF SLOVAK ORIGIN AS ANDY WORHAL AND GENE KRUPA TO ARTISTIC LIFE, AND EXPRESSING THE HOPE FOR BETTER TIMES AHEAD IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. DEPUTY MINISTER OF CULTURE, DR. JOSEF MRAVIK, GAVE A WARM WELCOME TO THE ORCHESTRA, REFERRED TO THE RECENTLY COMPLETED EXCHANGES AGREEMENT, AND URGED THAT IT QUICKLY BECOME A REALITY. MRS. MEHTA, BORN IN MICHIGAN, BUT OF SLOVAK LINEAGE, SHARED HER IMPRESSIONS OF BRATISLAVA AND THE EVENING WITH THOSE ASSEMBLED.

7. LOGISTICALLY, THE BRATISLAVA CHAPTER OF LAPO'S JOURNEY WENT SMOOTHLY. BUT IF WE WERE AN HOUR AHEAD OF POTENTIAL DISASTER IN PRAGUE, THE MARGIN WAS HALVED IN BRATISLAVA. DESPITE GUARANTEES BY SLOVKONCERT, HOTEL ROOMS WERE READY ONLY MINUTES AHEAD OF THE MUSICIANS ARRIVAL, AND THIS LARGEY BECAUSE MEMBERS OF THE P AND C STAFF SPED UP AND DOWN HOTEL HALLS ENCOURAGING SLOVAK CHAMBERMAIDS TO GREATER PRODUCTIVITY.

8. MOST LAPO INSTRUMENT CASES WERE TOO LARGE FOR THE FREIGHT ELEVATOR AT REDUTA HALL, AND THE HALL'S STAGE HANDS DISAPPEARED FOR BEER AND SAUSAGE AT ABOUT THE TIME THE PROCESSION OF TRUCKS WITH GONGS, DRUMS, ETC. ARRIVED FROM PRAGUE. ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS, P AND C SENIOR LOCAL GEORGE FRYD HAD A BACKUP CREW
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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 PRAGUE 03513 140834Z

READY, AND THE PLACEMENT OF OVER TWO TONS OF INSTRUMENTS WAS ARRANGED IN GOOD ORDER. LAPO'S TECHNICAL STAFF WAS HIGHLY PLEASED WITH THE LOCAL LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS.

9. AFTER THE CONCERT, APAO LEONARDO WILLIAMS SUPERVISED THE FREIGHT EXODUS ACROSS THE DANUBE FLOOD PLAIN TO VIENNA. THE BAGGAGE WAS SEALED BY CZECHOSLOVAK CUSTOMS OFFICIALS AT THE CONCERT HALL, FOLLOWING A

PREFUNCTORY INSPECTION OF SOME OF THE CONTRA-BASS
CASES TO SEE THAT NO ONE WAS BEING SMUGGLED OUT IN THEM.

10. THE ORCHESTRA MEMBERS LEFT THE FOLLOWING MORNING.
DURING THE FINAL BORDER CROSSING, THE SLOVKONCERT
LOGISTICS MANAGER TOLD THE PAO, HAD THE EMBASSY NOT
TAKEN OVER MOST ASPECTS OF THE LAPO VISIT AT THE
ELEVENTH HOUR, THE CONCERTS WOULD NOT HAVE MATERIALIZED.
THE LOCAL CONCERT AGENCIES, HE SAID, WERE
INEXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH THE DEMANDS OF A LARGE
AMERICAN ORCHESTRA, WERE UNDERSTAFFED, AND HAD NO
POWER TO RESOLVE HOTEL, TRANSPORTATION, AND RELATED
PROBLEMS WHEN AN IMPASSE WAS REACHED. BESIDES, HE
POINTED OUT, SLOVKONCERT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL STATE
CULTURAL FUNCTIONS, AND HAD TOTALLY BEEN TIED UP IN
RECENT WEEKS STAGING THE FUNERAL OF A LEADING SLOVAK
POET, WHO WAS ALSO A RANKING PARTY FIGURE.

11. SEPARATE MESSAGES WILL FOLLOW ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE
ASPECTS OF THE LAPO EXERCISE, AND THIS EMBASSY'S
EVALUATION OF THE ENTIRE EFFORT.

BYRNE

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